



**US Department of Housing and Urban Development
Fresno Area Office – 2135 Fresno Street – Fresno, CA 93721**

Office of the Director

April 22, 2005

Infrastructure Steering Group
Michael W. Wynne, Chairman
Undersecretary of Defense
3010 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-3010

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am writing as the coordinator of the Federal Interagency Task Force for the Economic Development of the Central San Joaquin Valley, which I staff as the Fresno Field Office Director for the Department of Housing and Urban Development. This unique body is composed of all federal agencies created and maintained by Executive Order #13173. It was signed by President Bill Clinton in October 2000, and renewed by President George Bush in February 2002, and again in October 2004.

Our Task Force is specifically assigned to focus federal attention and assistance on an economically depressed region encompassing seven counties in the central San Joaquin Valley of California. This region has an economy heavily impacted by Lemoore Naval Air Station (LNAS), Edwards Air Force Base, China Lake Naval Weapons Center, and the 144th Fighter Wing of the California Air National Guard at Fresno-Yosemite Airport. Our Task Force has carefully assessed the economic conditions of the Valley and has developed a plan of action working with locally led efforts relating to job development. We are at a very delicate point in the implementation of that strategy.

As you go about the important work of transforming our military and its installations to address post-Cold War Era threats, we believe the Base Realignment and Closure Committee should keep several things in mind when considering bases that affect the central San Joaquin Valley. First and foremost is the fact that, more than any other state in the union, California has had more bases – 15 in total - closed and/or realigned since 1988.

As such, this state has shouldered its fair share of the military transformation. Further reductions will only serve to weaken national security on the West Coast, which has two of the busiest ports and two of the busiest airports in the nation.

It is easy to see that the bases have strategic value even apart from their protection of the western United States. With the exception of the fighter wing, LNAS, China Lake, and Edwards are located away from major population centers and any sensitive environmental concerns.

Notwithstanding the general prosperity of the state, a recent study by the Congressional Research Service showed that the central San Joaquin Valley which has a population greater than 23 States, ranks below the rest of the nation, including Appalachia and the Tennessee Valley Authority, in overall federal spending. The San Joaquin Valley gets about \$2,000 less per capita than the rest of the nation – and that amount already includes the much needed positive economic impact the four installations have on the area. You can imagine what that number would become if even one of the installations were closed or downsized or removed from this region.

The Task Force realizes you are being heavily lobbied by communities around the country. We hope the above information will be helpful to you in your evaluations and deliberations. Clearly, two consecutive Presidents have recognized the dire conditions facing this often overlooked region of California by creating and then extending a unique Executive Order to focus attention on the central San Joaquin Valley. For that reason, the Task Force emphatically urges the Committee to follow the BRAC guidelines which allow consideration of local economic impacts and take these unique circumstances under consideration during its review.

We stand ready to assist you with any further information you may wish. Attached is a copy of our June, 2004 report to the President which led to his amendment and the October 2004 renewal of the Executive Order.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rolland F. Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rolland F. Smith, Coordinator
Interagency Task Force for the San Joaquin Valley

cc: Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger
Members of Task Force